



KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

SHELTON J. HAYNES
President & CEO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RuthAnne Visnauskas, Chair, Commissioner of NYSHCR
Robert F. Mujica Jr., Director of BUDGET
Conway S. Ekpo
David Kapell
David Kraut
Howard Polivy
Michael Shinozaki

Memorandum

DRAFT – PRIVILEGED & CONFIDENTIAL

To: Governor Kathy Hochul
From: Shelton Haynes, President and CEO, Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
Re: Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation’s Proposed Transparency Plan
Date: October 20, 2021

To begin, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) is a public benefit corporation, mandated by the RIOC Act, to develop, operate and maintain the infrastructure of Roosevelt Island. As part of that mandate, RIOC owns and operates the Aerial Tramway, located by the 59th Street Bridge; it runs a free red bus service for island residents and visitors; it has a Public Safety Department comprised of peace officers that serve as first responders to matter of public health and safety on the island, while also coordinating with the New York City Police Department, 114th Precinct, among other emergency responders. Additionally, RIOC operates other recreational facilities such as a Youth Center, a pool at our Sportspark facility; and other open space parks, fields, and areas. Roosevelt Island is home to the Cornell Technion Campus as well as numerous local attractions like Blackwell House, a cherry blossom grove, and FDR Four Freedoms State Park. There are in excess of 12,000 residents living on Roosevelt Island. RIOC also supports many of its local community-based organizations, through its public purpose fund grant program, in an effort to promote community-oriented activities, amenities, and other benefits.

Please accept this proposed RIOC Transparency Plan for your approval pursuant to the memo from Karen Persichilli Keogh and Elizabeth Fine dated September 20, 2021. Based on the directive contained therein, I reviewed RIOC’s policies and practices relating to transparency. I am pleased to report that RIOC has strong policies and practices in place to ensure our transparency in our operations, and there are several initiatives that I propose to build on our efforts.

Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Transparency Plan

I. Review of Agency/Authority’s Current Public Engagement

As directed by Secretary Keogh and Counsel Fine’s memo, I conducted a review of RIOC policies and practices related to transparency. In conducting this review, I focused on the policies and practices related to all areas of transparency with a particular focus on the following areas:

1. Freedom of Information Law;
2. Open Meetings Law;
3. Personal Privacy Protection Law;
4. Executive Order 8.95, Open Data NY;
5. Project Sunlight;
6. Public Authorities Law Section 2987, Reporting on Lobbying;
7. Public Officers Law Section 73-a;
8. Records Retention; and
9. ABO Policy Guidance on Posting and Maintaining Authority Website.

Based on this review, I can report that RIOC’s transparency-related practices and policies are strong. In addition to a compliance-related review of policies and practices I conducted a review of RIOC’s interactions with the public. RIOC prides itself on its community engagement practices. We have a robust program to communicate with members of the public and receive input from all stakeholders.

A. Robust Community Engagement Strategy

Specifically, RIOC regularly holds community meetings to provide information and solicit input on a variety of projects or items important to members of the community. These bi-monthly targeted community engagement meetings composed of RIOC staff and several community groups, place emphasis on island initiatives and projects that impact the public. Additionally, RIOC holds approximately ten annual Board of Director meetings, as well as Operational Advisory meetings, Audit Committee meetings and Real Estate Development Advisory meeting of committees comprised of members of the Board of Directors. When not restricted due to the pandemic, these meetings are available for public attendance. Further there is a public comment period, both in person and remotely using specialized software for the express purpose of maintaining comment availability despite the pandemic. Additionally, RIOC regularly engages with community-based organizations like the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, among other community-based groups, through various members of my staff. RIOC’s Public Safety Department, the uniformed peace force located on the Island also regularly engages in community outreach. Moreover, RIOC takes advantage of existing community relations outlets when there are items of note to discuss with the public by attending Manhattan Community Board 8 meetings and other RIOC-sponsored Town Hall meetings.

B. Informal Community Touchpoints

RIOC has many informal community touchpoints in addition to our formalized robust community engagement strategy. Specifically, as Roosevelt Island is a small community, many members of the community regularly engage us just walking on the street. This is in part because many authority employees have frequently worked here for many years and also because we make it a point to be out in the community representing the authority at programmed events.

C. Informative, Easy-to-Use Website and Social Media

RIOC strives to maintain an informative, easy-to-use website that is also compliant with our obligations under the ABO's Policy Guidance on Posting and Maintaining Authority Websites. In particular, RIOC ensures prompt posting of records that will be the subject of discussion at Board of Director meetings, minutes, and agendas promptly and when available. Also posted to our website our newsletter, which is a point of pride for me as President because of the level of community engagement it brings. RIOC News: Community, Identity, Conversations and Innovations regularly includes progress updates on capital projects complete with photos, anticipated dates of completion and financial information; a calendar of events; the latest information on our community outreach; and a message from me.

RIOC also maintains numerous social media channels for regular community engagement including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Additionally, we have our own advisory platform optimized to notify the public via telephone, text or email of relevant information such as emergency updates, island events, parking restrictions, etc. Information posted to these channels are often cross-posted to allow for further engagement on each platform.

II. Proposed Plan to Expand Transparency and Expected Timeline

Outlined below are proposed areas to increase transparency along with a timeline for implementation and required resources.

A. Increased Availability of Information on RIOC's Website

As suggested in the September 20 memo, RIOC's website was reviewed for information that is not currently posted and we will be making the consideration of posting information on our site an ongoing process. As discussed above, RIOC's website and social media platforms are informative and a key part of our engagement work, of which, our newsletter plays an important part. In order to further this, with an eye toward language access, we will work to produce translations of our newsletters into different languages to allow for additional community engagement. This will be an ongoing business practice. I anticipate that our existing translation services contract will enable us to translate our newsletter at existing rates and in a reasonable time frame.

B. EO 95 - Open Data NY

My review of our transparency practices indicated that RIOC does not currently maintain any datasets on the Open Data website. My staff and I are updating our policies and procedures to include posting of information on Open Data NY as a regular part of our business practice. Additionally, we are in the process of reviewing the data maintained by RIOC for inclusion on the

website. We anticipate posting data relevant to various sections of our business including historical permitting data, public programming data, as well as public facilities and points of interest. This will be an ongoing business practice and will publish or update datasets on a rolling basis.

C. Additional Community Engagement

RIOC has a robust community engagement practice and strategy in place, but additional community engagement can serve to further the authority's mission. Specifically, we can ensure a member of RIOC staff attends all Community Board 8 Roosevelt Island subcommittee meetings in addition to those community board meetings we attend related to projects or initiatives. Moreover, as part of this strategy, we can work to educate the public regarding RIOC's place in the state/city/local government infrastructure due to the overlapping nature of much of the work on Roosevelt Island. This work is ongoing and does not require additional resources.

D. Working to Increase Electronic Records and Reduce FOIL Fees

One positive effect on RIOC's business practices from the pandemic may be an increase in our use of electronic records including softcopy original documentation. As this process continues, it will allow for quicker gathering of records sought under the Freedom of Information Law. RIOC has not, to my knowledge, charged a requestor for FOIL production during my tenure at the authority. This will serve to increase efficiency and reduce staff costs, which helps to keep FOIL production costs low. This is ongoing and no additional resources are needed.

III. Measures of Success and Long-term Monitoring

In order to ensure compliance on an ongoing basis by including them in our schedule of annual policy reviews. Additionally, RIOC will monitor and assess the following metrics:

- A. Website traffic and social media engagement – RIOC can review and maintain data from these sources to understand the effect our proposed initiatives.
- B. Formal and Informal Touchpoints – RIOC can review and maintain information from our variety of formal and informal touchpoints to assess the effect of the proposed initiatives.